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SUBJECT: TURKEY: ACROSS THE BOARD, OFFICIALS CHARACTERIZE
HRANT DINK ASSASSINATION AS ATTACK AGAINST THE NATION

REF: ISTANBUL 000038

¶1. (SBU) GOT officials and Turkish politicians across the political spectrum moved quickly to condemn the assassination of Turkish-Armenian journalist and human rights activist Hrant Dink (reftel). PM Erdogan conducted a live press conference within 90 minutes of the attack, while President Sezer, Speaker of Parliament Arinc, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all major political party leaders rushed to release statements. Turkish political leaders, visibly shocked, stressed unanimously that this was not just an attack against one individual, but against the Turkish nation as a whole. Synopses of statements follow.

¶2. (U) PM Erdogan stated, "We are in deep sorrow. ...I say openly that this attack, while on the person of Dink, was aimed at all of us...our integrity and unity as a nation and our country's comfort and stability. The bullet was fired at free thought and at democratic life. I condemn the bloody hands behind this murder on my government's and nation's behalf. I have assigned our Interior and Justice Ministers to head the effort to apprehend the perpetrator or perpetrators and planners as soon as possible and be brought before justice. The moment I heard about the incident, I gave instructions to all relevant government agencies, primarily intelligence organizations. We are investigating the murder in all its dimensions and we will do whatever is necessary to get to the bottom of it. ...Everyone should know that neither this bloody provocation, nor dark sources, nor such a heinous plan can disturb our unity and togetherness. Our citizens, primarily our Armenian origin citizens, have the common sense and prudence to withstand this test. I extend my condolences to my nation and urge especially administrators of our newspapers and televisions to give prominence to common sense." He also noted, "We find it very meaningful that this murder was committed in these days during which so-called Armenian genocide allegations are on the agenda in some countries." After his statement, PM Erdogan answered questions of journalists. He said the Ministers of Interior and Justice will attend the funeral ceremony of Dink; he may as well if his schedule permits.

¶3. (U) President Sezer strongly denounced the armed attack against Dink, saying:

"I am deeply saddened that Hrant Dink lost his life in an attack ... I condemn this ugly and shameful attack. Such inhuman acts can never reach their goals. Our expectation is that the perpetrators of this attack - who have deeply wounded our nation -- will be apprehended as soon as possible. ... I extend my condolences to the family of Hrant Dink, to our press and to our nation."

¶4. (U) TGNA Speaker Arinc stated that the insidious and treacherous attack was aiming directly at the future and happiness of Turkey. Arinc expressed sorrow over the

assassination and noted, "No matter who carried out this attack and for whatever reason, it is an attack on the peace and unity of the country and the peace within our nation."

¶5. (U) Interior Minister Aksu strongly deplored the attack on an esteemed journalist and stated that this was an attack on the peace, confidence and stability of the country. He stressed that nothing would be attained through such attacks and appealed to everyone to remain calm and to act with common sense. Aksu noted that law enforcement authorities have already started to work in order to bring perpetrators to justice.

¶6. (U) Opposition CHP leader Baykal termed the attack "shameful" and claimed that whoever carried it out or contracted it has harmed Turkey. Baykal noted that no belief, idea, patriotism or nationalism could be related to such a murder. He expressed hope that light would be shed on the attack soon, adding, "Such initiatives won't be able to shake the environment of tolerance and peace in Turkey." Anavatan leader Erkan Mumcu stated, "It is not Dink who was shot, it is Turkey's credibility." DYP leader Agar issued a statement strongly denouncing the attack. He expressed his sorrow and added that in a critical period in which Turkey faces very important external problems, this attack would level a serious blow to Turkey's national interests. He termed the assassination an attack "casting a shadow on freedom of thought and expression" and extended his condolences.

¶7. (U) Embassy Ankara released the following statement:

"We were shocked and deeply troubled to hear that Hrant Dink

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was killed in an armed attack today in Istanbul. We send heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones and express our hope that the perpetrator of this heinous crime will quickly be brought to justice."

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